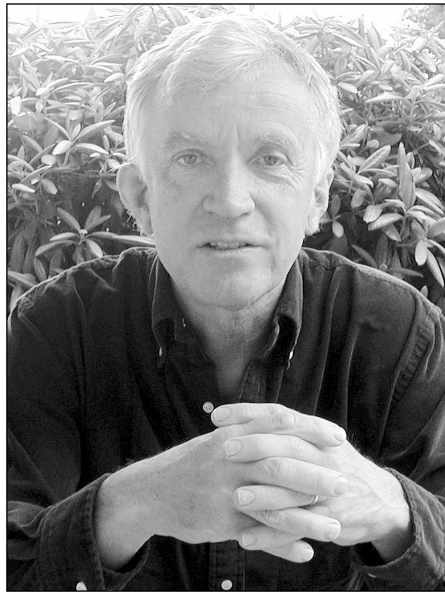


INTEGRATING THE ARTS IN THERAPY



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shaun McNiff is founder of the first integrated arts in therapy graduate program at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The discipline of expressive arts therapy emerged from the Lesley community and its international affiliates. McNiff's many books and writings have been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, German, and other languages. He is an exhibiting painter and an internationally recognized authority on the arts and healing, creativity enhancement, and art-based research which was first formulated by his writings. McNiff has received various honors and awards for his work and in 2002 Lesley appointed him as its first University Professor.

Pianofish [cover] by Shaun McNiff. Courtesy of Martha Barry McKenna.

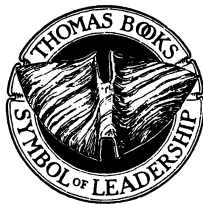
INTEGRATING THE ARTS IN THERAPY

History, Theory, and Practice

By

SHAUN McNIFF

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Lesley University
Cambridge, Massachusetts*



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To Paolo Knill and the students who keep us going.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I*ntegrating the Arts in Therapy* sets the mark, perhaps three or four times over, for the amount of time and energy that I have given to creating a book. I have never before read and reread, and generated as many drafts of a manuscript, trying to get it right. This is a second portrait of a subject first rendered 25 years ago by *The Arts and Psychotherapy*, a book which is still going strong, and thus sets the bar high for a second interpretation of the use of all of the arts in therapy.

The extended process can no doubt be attributed to the breadth and complexity of the subject matter involving all of the arts and their integration; the range of therapeutic applications; the major growth of the expressive arts therapy field since the late 1970s; and the challenges of synthesizing historical, theoretical, and practical information into an accessible text. But I am more inclined to view the prolonged effort as a manifestation of my deep commitment to expressive arts therapy and the people involved with this discipline. This is a book for my community, the people who have been with me over the years, and perhaps even more importantly, those who will advance art and healing in the future, a thoroughly reliable expectation based on my witnessing its appeal to successive generations of talented students, artists, and professionals.

My dogged working and reworking of the text is no doubt also due to a reluctance to let go and complete a rendering of a life's work and its many threads of creation that are far from finished. Furthermore, my view of expressive arts therapy is constantly recreating itself, not only through my practice, but even in the writing of this book.

In keeping with core tenets of the creative process, the work of art has a mind of its own, an inner clock, and an inherent sense of what it needs and when *it is finished*. As we learn in expressive arts therapy practice, the creative expression is the ultimate source of information about itself, telling me now that it is ready and as complete as I can make it.

I offer heartfelt thanks and appreciation to my readers and especially those of you who are committed to studying the comprehensive expressive arts therapy literature and thus furthering the growth of our discipline and the larger domain of creative arts therapy. As my poet mentor Vincent

Ferrini once said to me, “without readers, inky doom.” When I was an aspiring painter in the 1970s, I never imagined that my primary connection to the world would be through books, but I have embraced the outcome and view it as yet another manifestation of how the creative process operates in unexpected ways. Just about everything I have done in trying to revive archetypal currents of art and healing has called for expansion of institutionalized structures of art and therapy so it is perhaps fitting that I found new venues for furthering change.

Special thanks are extended to my colleagues Stephen Levine, Bruce Moon, Vivien Marcow Speiser, and Phillip Speiser for writing Commentaries. These responses are in sync with my core expressive arts therapy method of one artwork following another in an ongoing succession of creations. It is my hope that readers will do the same and use the book as a stimulus for imagining the work further through their own expressions and service to others.

Thanks to Andrea Bloomgarden who invited me to write a chapter in her book on the self-disclosure of therapists (2008) while working on this project. That task took me outside my usual frame of reference and helped me to think more deeply about what the expressive arts therapist shows and does not show when making art in sessions and it also helped me see my early work with Priscilla in a more complete way. The invitation to write a chapter for another book at a time when I was immersed in completing this volume underscores my emphasis on the indirect ways of creative discovery and how our expressions are part of a larger ecology where doing something in a different medium or context advances our primary purpose in ways that cannot be preconceived.

I could not have written this book comfortably during a busy period while serving as Dean of Lesley College of Lesley University without the support of our Provost, Martha Barry McKenna, and the day-to-day understanding and kindness of my Assistant Dean, Susan Loomis, two of my artist-colleagues in Cambridge. I am also grateful to Karen Gallas, Paolo Knill, Stephen Levine, Vivien Marcow Speiser, and Phillip Speiser for reading early drafts of the manuscript in response to my requests for verification of factual and historical information. Phillip Speiser, who has focused his scholarship and teaching on the history of expressive arts therapy theory and practice, volunteered to serve as my primary critical reader and his responses to the complete manuscript were invaluable.

I thank Michael Thomas, president of Charles C Thomas, for the patience and support that he has given me during this extended project in a manner strikingly consistent with my dealings with his father, Payne Thomas, who believing in the future of the arts in therapy gave me the opportunity to publish *The Arts and Psychotherapy* and my next three books. *Integrating the Arts in Therapy* has been a homecoming and I look forward to more to come.

Shaun McNiff

THREE COMMENTARIES

THE ENORMITY AND VISION OF THE UNDERTAKING

VIVIEN MARCOW SPEISER AND PHILLIP SPEISER

It is fitting for us to once again salute and embrace the life, the work, and the teachings of Shaun McNiff on the occasion of the publication of *Integrating the Arts in Therapy: History, Theory, and Practice*. We were there at the beginning of this integrative journey as students who immediately grasped the enormity and vision of the undertaking. Shaun founded, conceptualized, mobilized, and steadfastly developed and advocated for a field that only he dared to imagine. He found willing partners in the faculty he chose and in the students who were attracted to the program. Shaun always knew how to nurture human potential and from the beginning put his trust in the creative process. As students in the mid-seventies, like our peers, we knew intuitively, without reservation and without question that he and we were all together on the right track. In those heady days, it was the *Zeitgeist* of that moment where we were becoming the living manifestation of the evolving theory. Shaun always made it clear that there was no one prescriptive right approach and each of us felt empowered to own the work, mark it, and make it in our image. We were all young, the world was literally at our feet and Shaun's trust in the work, in each of us, and most of all in being the holder and keeper of the process, emboldened us to allow the work to shape itself.

And it did. At that time, the creative arts therapy fields were all young, all struggling to define themselves, many of them becoming increasingly rigid and adoptive of theory not indigenous to the arts. As the Dean of the Institute for Arts and Human Development, at Lesley College (now University), Shaun put together an extraordinary team of arts therapists, arts educators, and artists and challenged everyone to embark with him on a journey that would explore the connections between the arts, performance, therapy, and education. This early groundbreaking work led to the creation of the new "integrative" branch of creative arts therapies known today as Expressive Arts Therapy.

The universal appeal of the integrative approach to the arts in therapy and education attracted students from all around the world and the learning community it spawned was vital, international, experimental, and innovative. It has created a lifetime's worth of webbing all across the globe where people and programs continue to evolve. From Israel to Scandinavia, across the United States and Europe, spanning the far corners of the globe, alumni and former Lesley faculty continue to hold dominion and influence the expressive arts therapy and education fields.

Shaun was and is the leading scholar in this field. In 1981, he first published the ground breaking text, *The Arts and Psychotherapy*. It is fitting that he now returns to a re-visioning of that work in these times. This new book masterfully integrates theory with practice, drawing upon concrete examples and case studies. The youthful passion for the work remains. The commitment to honoring the creative process is unwavering. The living example that Shaun provides to the next generation remains inspirational. Shaun is open to whatever emerges and that capacity to flow with and respond aesthetically in the moment allows him to utilize and synergize intricate yet basic fundamental principles intrinsic to art and meaning-making.

This latest book clarifies, contextualizes, and grounds the field in its full history, written by and from the source of its creative inspiration. As Shaun always reminds us, breathe in and breathe out, let's stay present and honor this moment.

CHALLENGED, PROVOKED, AND INSPIRED

BRUCE L. MOON

In 1984, I was working as an art therapist at the Harding Psychiatric Hospital in Worthington, Ohio and in my first year as the President of the Buckeye Art Therapy Association. I was looking for someone to serve as the keynote speaker for our annual symposium. I had recently read Shaun McNiff's *The Arts and Psychotherapy* and found myself intrigued by his ideas related to total expression in the creative arts therapies. I called Lesley College and invited Shaun to speak to the association. His acceptance of the invitation marked the beginning of our relationship that has now spanned 25 years.

As an art therapist who has always been active in the American Art Therapy Association and deeply committed to my identity as a painter, I have at various times been challenged, provoked, and inspired by Shaun's interest in integrating all of the arts in self-expression. There was a time in my professional life when I was so concerned with maintaining disciplinary boundaries that I unnecessarily compartmentalized and segregated art forms.

I did this, not only in relation to colleagues, but within myself as well. In a recent conversation with Shaun, it occurred to me that early in my career I essentially dis-integrated my own art practices, that is to say, I put my painter-self in one box, musician-self in another, poet-self in yet another box, and I made sure the boxes were stacked on separate shelves.

That was then, and this is now. In the ensuing years, I have become fascinated by McNiff's notion that one can move between worlds in the service of suffering people. As a result of grappling with his writings, I came to new understandings of my own art practices and gradually included poetry, music, sound, and performance art in both clinical work and in teaching graduate art therapy students. Perhaps because of my long association with Shaun I have grown comfortable in writing songs about my clients, and I often engage them in writing poetry in response to paintings, and creating performance enactments in the context of art therapy sessions.

In thinking about this new book I have been struck by McNiff's unerring capacity to honor the traditions of various art forms while simultaneously being open to untraditional methods of encouraging people to tap into the healing forces of self-expression. As the director of the graduate art therapy program at Mount Mary College, I have witnessed this firsthand as Shaun has led our annual Opening Colloquium for many years. I have seen how he is able to focus the attention of large groups and create a safe and sacred space that allows participants to stretch themselves and get comfortable with being uncomfortable. *Integrating the Arts in Therapy: History, Theory, and Practice* is a comprehensive literary documentation of McNiff's theoretical orientation that is the foundation of four decades of experimentation and practice.

This book presents not only a thorough discussion of theory, but also an account of the history of the emergence of a multidisciplinary approach to working with people everywhere. Further, it offers glimpses into his clinical work with children, adolescents, and adults that serve to anchor his ideas in authentic case vignettes that are an invaluable contribution to our body of knowledge. Finally, this book serves as a testament to a long career of groundbreaking leadership in the expressive arts, therapy, and education.

THE WORK IS FOREVER BEGINNING

STEPHEN K. LEVINE

Shaun McNiff's new book, a reshaping of his earlier classic, *The Arts and Psychotherapy*, is a fresh look at the work to which he has devoted his profes-

sional, and much of his personal, life: the healing power of the arts. Shaun is an initiator, a path-finder, and breaker, one who is always reinventing himself and the field in which he finds his place. In doing so, he is true to the spirit of the arts: the creative renewal that draws us to this work.

I first met Shaun at the Institute for the Arts and Human Development at Lesley College (now Lesley University), the home of the expressive therapy program which he founded and led for many years. I was looking for something that was missing from my life, something that didn't yet have a name for me. I had been teaching philosophy in the university, training in and practicing psychotherapy in the clinic, and writing poetry and performing in the theatre; and I felt like I was living in three different worlds, worlds which drew on diverse faculties of the mind: the intellect, the emotions, and the imagination. The program at Lesley gave me an opportunity to integrate all my interests and a focus on which to put my abilities to work. Shaun, Paolo Knill, and Elizabeth McKim were my primary inspirations. Each brought their own distinctive perspectives, based on different primary art forms (Shaun on visual art, Paolo on music and movement, and Elizabeth on poetic language), yet each integrated their primary modality within a common sense of the artistic process. As Dean and leader of the program, Shaun was the one who provided the space for this creative work to take place. He played the same role in his own classes and workshops, somehow creating an environment in which each participant could act with all their powers. I was amazed to see how he did this seemingly without effort, setting the frame and tending it in an unobtrusive yet quietly effective way.

In his writing we can see the same ability at work. All the diverse experiences in different clinical settings, all the different artistic modalities, and all the varying theoretical perspectives are given free play in this book; and each is allowed to present themselves at their best. Underlying all the diversity is a single unifying focus: a trust in the creative process and in the ways it can play a transformative role in our lives. Shaun sometimes uses the word "energy" to describe the source of all his work, and one can sense it in his writing. The words are carried by an energetic force that binds together all the different thoughts and images. Heraclitus said, "Everything flows," and Shaun McNiff's book resonates with the flow of life that is at the pulse of all the arts.

It is this energetic flow that restores us to a contact with the primal forces of life that gives us the courage to face the difficulties and dark times with a confidence based on the faith that there is something of value underlying it all. Gerard Manley Hopkins' great poem, "Pied Beauty," reminds us, as Shaun does, of the particularity and beauty of each individual being; yet at the end, it concludes, "He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: Praise him." Underlying the variety of Shaun's creative work, of his artistic and therapeutic practice, and of his numerous writings, there is this same sense

that in the flux of becoming, something endures, something that we can only praise.

This book brings me back to that creative source of life and, in so doing, gives me again the spirit of renewal which I found at Lesley so many years ago. “Everything about art and healing . . . is grounded in a process of renewal.” I hope that readers will find, in Shaun McNiff’s reflections on a lifetime’s work, a reinvigoration of their own creative powers and the courage to begin again.

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INTEGRATING THE ARTS IN THERAPY

I. INTRODUCTION

ALL OF THE ARTS

In 1981, *The Arts and Psychotherapy* was written to introduce and advance the practice of using all of the arts and integrating them in therapy. Seven years earlier, I had started the first truly multidisciplinary graduate program at Lesley University (then Lesley College) in Cambridge, Massachusetts where we integrated all of the arts into a field that we called expressive therapy. Other North American schools may have offered course work and programs in different therapeutic art forms, but Lesley was the first to base graduate studies upon a comprehensive integration of the arts. The philosophy and methods struck an international chord with students and faculty joining our community from many countries and regions of the United States with the goal of exploring how different art forms naturally complement one another in therapeutic practice when there is a commitment to the breadth of human expression.

Students came to us with stories about how they had always longed to express themselves seriously in different art forms but their schooling and later professional practice were constructed upon separations of the arts. In my personal experience, I always felt that the expressive arts emerged from the same source, like the place described in *Ecclesiastes*, 1:7 from which all the streams flow and ultimately return to “run again.”

The arts certainly have their distinct qualities and they present different challenges in terms of expressive arts therapists being able to work effectively in the individual domains. I view art forms like persons, each one offering endless variations, but ultimately they are all linked to a common creative purpose. In my experience, an integrated use of the arts has repeatedly deepened the range and imagination of expression and my ability to engage the whole person in the therapeutic process.

Those of us who work with all of the arts in therapy have agreed to use the term *expressive arts therapy* to describe our discipline. We respect the choice that others make to work exclusively with one art form or one mode of expression within an artistic discipline (i.e., clay, watercolor, or photography

within art therapy; percussion or voice within music therapy; and so forth). Many of us who practice expressive arts therapy are actively involved in one or more of the more circumscribed domains of art therapy, bibliotherapy, dance therapy, drama therapy, music therapy, poetry therapy, and psychodrama.

The term creative arts therapy has been used to designate the grouping of all of the individual arts therapy specializations and their professional associations. Expressive arts therapy describes a distinct discipline of integrated and multimodal arts practice which is a part of the larger creative arts therapy community.

During the 1970s, when we were initiating the practice of expressive arts therapy, my colleague Paolo Knill would insist that integrated arts practice has a long history as an artistic discipline just like orientations to a single art form or more specifically even to an instrument or medium. All of us, whether integrating the arts or dedicated to a single creative arts therapy modality, are united in using the arts, creative expression, and aesthetic experience as ways of furthering the well-being of others. This commitment to art in service to humanity is also the distinguishing feature of our community within the larger context of the arts.

Reflections on the History of a Discipline

As I approach the completion of four decades of uninterrupted work within expressive arts therapy, and after writing many books, chapters, and essays about this work, I feel a necessity to revisit my first attempt to create a comprehensive text about using and integrating all of the arts in therapy and healing. *The Arts and Psychotherapy* (1981) is still being read and appears to have an established place in the literature of expressive arts therapy. I am especially grateful to my colleagues who have consistently used the book in their teaching. Therefore, I have given some considerable thought about the need for a second book dealing with this topic.

The original volume stands as a record of my thinking and practice at that early point in my career. The book, which will soon be released in a Japanese translation, also examines theories and historical continuities which I hope are as relevant today as they were in 1981. "The Enduring Shaman" which connects contemporary artistic expressions to archetypal patterns has proven to be a reliable foundation for professional practice as has the book's general orientation to art-based approaches to psychology.

I consulted with Michael Thomas, president of Charles C Thomas Publisher, about how to best rekindle the vision of *The Arts and Psychotherapy* within our current generation. It became clear that I needed to write the

whole story of how I viewed the emergence of integrated arts therapy practice from my start in March of 1970 to date.

We determined that there is a need for a new and more comprehensive treatment of expressive arts therapy. The field has grown significantly and I feel a compelling need to publish my present views together with an account of the formative and early years of practice. Having achieved my goal of writing a series of books on subjects related to art and healing for a general audience (1992, 1995, 1998, 2003, 2004), I am inspired to work with my original publisher in writing a book addressed directly to students, expressive arts therapists, other professionals, and readers hoping to learn more about the history and practice of our discipline.

The first ten years of my practice had a tremendous influence on my understanding of expressive arts therapy and they have an important place in this second portrait of the discipline. It is affirming to realize how alive these early experiences are today and how the first things that I did as a young professional continue to inform what I do now. These reflections on the past engender a more complete sense of the present, why I do certain things and do not do others, how so many aspects of my practice and values have not changed where others have changed significantly. I am also struck by the archetypal qualities of occurrences that transcend time such the young boy's engagement of *Star Wars* mythology three decades ago in relation to the death of his father in Vietnam.

It has been significant to review earlier case materials and see how they have as much relevance today as they had then and how there is very little that I would alter in terms of the particular things that we did together. However, I have done some considerable "tightening-up" of my descriptions and interpretations. In spite of my constant emphasis on the problems of projective interpretation, I found subtle instances of speculation in the earlier accounts. Therefore, my efforts to strengthen the text have less to do with suggesting different ways of acting in situations and more to do with how I write about them. This discovery reinforces my commitment to vigilance when it comes to interpreting why we think people act in certain ways. I strive to the best of my ability to carefully describe what people do and the outcomes of their actions and exercise caution with regard to attributing causes.

I must qualify my efforts to enhance history and honor the legacy and practice of expressive arts therapy with a declaration that I offer reflections, viewpoints, and memories. I look back, no doubt with inevitable bias, at how this discipline has taken shape within my life while doing everything I can to move the work forward for others. It is not possible for me or perhaps any person to write the definitive history of a complex professional phenomenon. Rather I have tried to present the story of my experience as a person deeply engaged with the process of expressive arts therapy from its inception.